



LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

June 23, 2005

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Oppose the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA)

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Dear Representative,

The League of Conservation Voters (LCV) is the political voice of the national environmental community. Each year, LCV publishes the *National Environmental Scorecard*, which details the voting records of Members of Congress on environmental legislation. The *Scorecard* is distributed to LCV members, concerned voters nationwide, and the press.

LCV urges you to oppose the free trade agreement with Central America and the Dominican Republic (CAFTA-DR). We are concerned that CAFTA-DR's lack of adequate environmental provisions threatens public health and the environment throughout Central America and the Dominican Republic. We are also concerned that the agreement's investor provisions could undermine environmental laws and regulations in the United States and Central America.

CAFTA-DR does not require any country to adopt and maintain a set of basic environmental laws and regulations. Trade and investment resulting from CAFTA-DR could have a negative impact on air and water quality and could also lead to further habitat loss in a region that has already lost 70 percent of its forest cover. Unfortunately, CAFTA-DR's environmental provisions are inadequate, contain numerous loopholes, and would not improve environmental protection in the region.

The agreement would also allow foreign investors to challenge environmental laws and regulations in all countries that are parties to the agreement, including the United States. CAFTA-DR includes language similar to NAFTA's Chapter 11, which allows foreign companies to challenge environmental and public health standards before international tribunals, demanding compensation and bypassing domestic courts. Mexico and Canada have lost Chapter 11 challenges to domestic environmental laws, and the United States has already spent millions defending itself against claims totaling nearly \$2 billion.

We urge you to oppose CAFTA-DR in order to prevent the degradation of the environment and public health throughout Central America and the Dominican Republic and to protect environmental laws from harmful investor suits. LCV has scored votes on trade agreements that adversely affect public health and the environment in the past, and the Political Advisory Committee will consider including votes on these issues in compiling LCV's 2005 *Scorecard*. If you need more information, please call Tiernan Sittenfeld or Barbara Elkus in my office at (202) 785-8683.

Sincerely,

Deb Callahan
President